

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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SUBJECT: BREMEN LAND ELECTION - SEPTEMBER 28

REF: BREMEN'S A-69 SEP 11, 1975

1. SUMMARY

THE SPD, CDU AND FDP ARE CAPPING THEIR CAMPAIGNS FOR THE SEPTEMBER 28 LAND ELECTION WITH SPEECHES BY CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT, MINISTER PRESIDENT STOLTENBERG, FEDERAL CDU MANAGER BIEDENKOPF AND FEDERAL MINISTER ERTL. ALL THREE PARTIES EXPRESS OPTIMISM. THE SPD, IN SPITE OF SOME POLL RESULTS TO THE CONTRARY, HOPES TO RETAIN ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. THE FDP EXPECTS ABOUT 10 TO 11 PERCENT AND THE CDU ABOUT 34 PERCENT. THE NEXT SENATE WILL PROBABLY REMAIN AN EXCLUSIVELY SPD GOVERNMENT WITH FEW CHANGES FROM THE PRESENT ONE OTHER THAN THE ADDITION OF TWO SENATORS FROM THE LEFT WING OF THE PARTY. THE POSSIBILITY OF AN SPD/FDP COALITION, ALTHOUGH IMPROBABLE, CANNOT BE TOTALLY EXCLUDED. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE SPD, IN SPITE OF TWO RECENT POLLS INDICATING THAT IT WOULD LOSE ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, REMAINS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE ELECTION. PARTY LEADERS, IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS, PREDICT ABOUT A 54 PERCENT VICTORY. LOSSES SINCE THE LAST ELECTION ARE BLAMED ON SWITCHES BY PROTEST VOTERS CAUSED BY CURRENT ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. A FEAR THAT SPD STALWARTS WILL STAY HOME ON ELECTION DAY IN THE EXPECTATION THAT THE PARTY WOULD OBTAIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY ANYWAY HAS LED TO PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS BY PARTY LEADERS PREDICTING A 49 TO 54 PERCENT SPD VOTE. THE LOSS OF THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IS MORE WORRISOME TO THE SPD'S LEFT WING THAN TO THE SO-CALLED SENATE WING UNDER BUEGERMEISTER HANS KOSCHNICK. THE FDP WILL FORM A COALITION WITH THE SPD IF THE LATTER LOSES ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY; IN SUCH A SITUATION, THE FDP WOULD ACT AS A COUNTERWEIGHT TO THE SPD'S LEFT WING, A NOT ALTOGETHER UNHAPPY DEVELOPMENT FOR KOSCHNICK SHOULD IT OCCUR. IF, AS WE EXPECT, THE SPD GOVERNS ALONE, KOSCHNICK WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO TAKE SOME LEFT WINGERS INTO THE SENATE, ESPECIALLY DEPUTY FLOOR LEADER HORST-WERNER FRANKE AND BUERGERSCHAFT MEMBER HERBERT BRUECKNER.

3. CDU LEADERS ARE CONVINCED THAT THE FRG'S FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES WILL WORK IN THEIR FAVOR. THEY FEEL THAT LOCAL ISSUES SUCH AS THE RECENT TAPE RECORDING SCANDAL IN BREMEN NO LONGER INTERESTS VOTERS. THEY EXPECT 34 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, I.E., ABOUT 2 PERCENT MORE THAN IN THE LAST LAND ELECTION IN 1971.

4. THE FDP EXPECTS TO GET AT LEAST 10 PERCENT OF THE VOTES, I.E., 3 PERCENT MORE THAN IN THE LAST LAND ELECTION. FDP CHAIRMAN HANS-JUERGEN LAHMANN HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HIS PARTY IS READY TO ENTER A COALITION WITH THE SPD ONLY IF THE LATTER LOSES ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. OTHERWISE THEY WILL STAY IN THE OPPOSITION. HE HAS CATEGORICALLY REJECTED A COALITION WITH THE CDU, AND, IN THIS CONTEXT, HAS SHARPLY CRITICIZED, IN PRIVATE, RECENT REMARKS BY FEDERAL FDP MANAGER MARTIN BANGEMANN CONCERNING FUTURE FDP COALITION TACTICS. ACCORDING TO LAHMANN, BANGEMANN'S REMARKS HAVE CONFUSED BREMEN VOTERS, WHO ARE NOW NO LONGER SURE WHETHER THE BREMEN FDP CONTINUES TO REJECT A COALITION WITH THE CDU. ACCORDING TO LAHMANN, "THIS ATTITUDE WILL HAVE CONSEQUENCES FOR BANGEMANN". LAHMANN IS CONVINCED

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THAT BOTH THE SPD AND THE CDU WILL SUFFER LOSSES BECAUSE OF THE BREMEN TAPE RECORDING AFFAIR--THE CDU MAINLY BECAUSE OF THE POOR TACTICAL METHODS USED, THE SPD BECAUSE THE AFFAIR WAS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF THE RESULTS OF THE BREMEN SPD PATRONAGE SYSTEM IN WHICH THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PARTY POLITICS AND LAND GOVERNMENT IS LOST. (IN THE RECORDING AFFAIR, THE CHIEF OF THE BREMEN POLICE BEGIN BRACKETS SPD END BRACKETS TRIED TO INFLUENCE THE SPD CANDIDATE LIST FOR THE LAND ELECTION THROUGH THE USE

OF A RECORDING OF A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION MADE IN CONNECTION WITH A POLICE INVESTIGATION.) THE MAIN FDP ELECTION GOALS ARE THEREFORE TO BREAK THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF THE SPD, TO OBTAIN TWO OR THREE SEATS IN THE SENATE, AND TO PREVENT EXPANSION OF THE PATRONAGE SYSTEM.

5. COMMENT: MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT THE BREMEN ELECTION OUTCOME IS QUITE PREDICTABLE. THE SPD WILL SUFFER SOME LOSSES, BUT IT WILL NOT LOSE ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY. THE CDU WILL OBTAIN ABOUT THE SAME PERCENTAGE AS IN THE LAST ELECTION, PERHAPS SLIGHTLY MORE DUE TO VOTER DISSATISFACTION WITH FEDERAL FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICIES. THE FDP WILL CERTAINLY INCREASE ITS SHARE OF THE VOTE DUE TO THE FACT THAT IT WAS THE ONLY MAJOR PARTY NOT INVOLVED IN THE TAPE RECORDING AFFAIR AND LAHMANN'S PERSONAL APPEAL. NO SMALLER PARTY WILL OBTAIN THE 5 PERCENT OF THE VOTE NECESSARY TO BE REPRESENTED IN THE BUERGERSCHAFT. ALL IN ALL, THE POLITICAL SCENE IN BREMEN AFTER THE ELECTION WILL NOT BE VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT HAS BEEN UP TO NOW. EITHER, AS WE EXPECT, THE SENATE WILL REMAIN THE SAME EXCEPT FOR A MARGINAL INCREASE IN LEFT-WING SPD INFLUENCE IF THE SPD RETAINS ITS ABSOLUTE MAJORITY; OR, THERE WILL BE AN SPD/FDP COALITION FOLLOWING THE BONN PATTERN UNDER THE FIRM LEADERSHIP OF KOSCHNICK.WESTON

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